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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Israeli - Lebanese Conflict:
Franco-American Diplomacy Iran
PARIS - Monday, August 07, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Israeli - Lebanese Conflict: Franco-American Diplomacy
Iran

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Today's lead international story revolves around the Franco-American agreement at the UN on a resolution for the Israeli-Lebanese crisis. While Sunday's Le Journal du Dimanche titled "Lebanon, Hope, Finally" this morning's headlines are a little more tempered: "The Franco-American Plan to the Test" says Le Figaro, while Liberation headlines "False Start for Peace." Both dailies emphasize that the draft resolution agreed to by Washington and Paris, "has been rejected by three key players: Beirut, Damascus and Tehran." Le Figaro interviews former Lebanese President Amine Gemayel who says "neither Israel nor Hezbollah are ready for a resolution." Iran's

rejection of the plan is announced on the front page of Le Figaro which carries an op-ed on Iran entitled "Iran: Frightening Without the Bomb, And With It?" by Ceri researcher Therese Delpeche. (See Part C) Essayist Guy Sorman pens an opinion piece in Le Figaro in which he claims that Arab-Muslim hatred of Israel reveals a war within itself. (See Part C) A petition signed by French university professors asks in Le Figaro for "the immediate cessation of Israel's massacre of Lebanese innocents."

For Liberation the draft resolution was "a laborious Franco-American compromise." But in his editorial Gerard Dupuy does not see how this compromise "can favor the second more functional compromise between the belligerents." (See Part C) La Croix's article says the plan "represents a victory for the French" and a "softening" of Washington's line. Despite this agreement, La Croix warns, obtaining broader consensus in the UNSC could prove difficult as some member states reproach France and the U.S. for negotiating "in absolute secret."

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Sunday's Le Journal du Dimanche interviews FM Douste-Blazy: "We and the Americans were quite far apart at the start of the negotiations... Today's agreement is a first very important step. We now need to get the approval of the other UNSC members." About the international force, he says: "Chirac was very clear. In the advent of a ceasefire, we will look into our active participation in the force..." The FM acknowledges that "as long as there is no cease-fire, there is a permanent risk of a regional outbreak."

France Soir carries an interview with Michel Aoun, former Lebanese head of government. According to Aoun, high civilian death tolls and destroyed infrastructure indicate that Israel is targeting all of Lebanon and not just Hezbollah. Aoun refers to Secretary of State's plan for a "new Middle East": "In any case, it is not about democracy... It could be that the Middle East of which Ms. Rice speaks is a shift of regional countries' geographic borders."

In an interview in Le Parisien, UMP Deputy Claude Goasguen claims Israel had no "premeditation" for a "counterattack to a veritable act of war" by Hezbollah. Goasguen further regrets FM Douste-Blazy's meeting with the FM of Iran, which is "overtly bellicose and anti-Semitic." In another interview, UMP Deputy Etienne Pinte describes the conflict as avoidable: "Two Israeli prisoners do not merit a conflict." While Pinte concedes to Israel the right of self defense, it cannot do this "to the detriment of populations."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Israeli - Lebanese Conflict: Franco-American Diplomacy

"A Resolution Goes Unheeded..."

Gerard Dupuy in left-of-center liberation (08/07): "The Franco-American draft resolution was a laborious Franco-American compromise which has been rejected by Lebanon, and Hezbollah's godparents, Iran and Syria... This was an honorable compromise between the French and American positions. But how will this compromise favor the second more functional and required compromise between the belligerents? President Bush supports the resolution but remains 'skeptical' about its implementation; the Israelis are pleased... and the Arabs are furious: in short, everyone is playing his assigned role... But why has France, which wants to position itself as a third party in the equation, taken the risk of appearing to favor a unilateral position? In undersigning a resolution that will probably not be heeded, France's diplomacy gives a bizarre image of the warden of peace it is trying to project... France holds too few trump cards to waste even a single one."

"Time Is Short"

Dominique Quinio in Catholic La Croix (08/07): "The international community was eagerly waiting for the U.S. to soften its position and show less than total support for Israel. This is why everyone is saluting the draft resolution reached at the UN after a compromise between the French and the Americans. But like all compromises, the Franco-American plan at the UN is unsatisfactory, even if it does show a joint desire for involvement by both parties. But the text calls not for a ceasefire but for a cessation of hostilities-which allow defensive military actions-each side laying on the other the

responsibility for attacking first... Lebanese hostility to and Iranian rejection of the agreement are already major obstacles to obtaining any resolution. The small diplomatic step taken Saturday is therefore not sure to succeed. Much negotiation will be needed. And meanwhile, the battle rages on."

"Beyond Hezbollah, a War Within Islam,"

Guy Sorman in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/07): "Arab countries do not accept the existence of Israel ... since its creation Muslim nations have vowed to eliminate it ... and the only nation which carries any weight is the U.S... Israel has for 60 years crystallized the hatred of the Arab-Muslim world - anti-Zionism being a sort of Arab aphrodisiac, according to the late Moroccan King, is really 'disproportionate...' Economics alone doesn't explain this conflict since Israel has no oil nor any natural resources other than the value added by its population... It may be that Israel is seen as the forward base of a democratic West in the Islamic world... and that what is going on is a war between the Arab moderates and the Arab fundamentalists. Recent free elections in Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain show that Arabs can free themselves and their future - Allah willing."

Iran

"Iran Threatens the West"

Delphine Minoui in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/07): "Tehran has rejected the latest UN resolution on the nuclear issue, with Iran's negotiator calling the resolution 'illegal.' According to Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Larijani, the West has 'killed' the negotiations with its adoption of a text that goes 'against' the nature of the talks. Iran's Parliamentary Foreign Relations Commission spokesman says that the 'issue here is not trust; what is at issue is that Americans want to impose their plan on the Greater Middle East...'"

"Iran Is Scary Enough Without the Bomb, But With It????"

Therese Delpeche of the CERI (Center for International Research) in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/07): "The resolution adopted on July 31st shows once again that it is not Washington and European capitals alone that demand that Iran suspend its nuclear program. The only nation that voted against the resolution was Qatar... Qatar's vote is an indication of how much the region fears Tehran: Qatar has no sympathies for Iran. Neither did it vote in this manner to protest against Israel's strikes against Lebanon... General belief has it that the attack by Hezbollah was triggered by Tehran... days before the G8... where Iran's nuclear issue was to be discussed. It is reasonable to wonder about a diversion method by the Iranians, who share ideological ties with Hezbollah... Those who share this opinion in New York also fear that Iran could take other unpleasant initiatives... While Doha's vote demonstrates to what extent Tehran's attitude has the Middle East in a frenzy, we need to draw the proper lessons. Iran has now been acknowledged as possessing considerable nuisance power. And many fear that the Iranian regime might take advantage of the situation, as demonstrated by the stance of those who acknowledge that Iran possesses a 'stabilizing' role. Another lesson that must be drawn is that America's allies have more limited confidence in America's ability to protect them. This is very serious because it can lead certain nations to revise their nuclear defense policies... Reason dictates a forceful response to Iran's threat... possibly before the UNSC welcomes its new members next January: Venezuela, South Africa and Indonesia. Diplomacy always acts as if time was on its side. Considering the threats brought to light these past few weeks, one would hope for a decision before January. But this outcome remains illusory." STAPLETON